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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [FR](#) [TU](#) [PINS](#) [XT](#)  
SUBJECT: DAS BRYZA AND MOI DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR DISCUSS  
MUSLIM INTEGRATION

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: In an October 24 meeting with EUR DAS Matt Bryza, Minister of Interior Sarkozy's Diplomatic Advisor, David Martinon, expressed interest in U.S. thinking on Muslim integration in Europe and highlighted the various ways in which the GOF has approached the problem in recent years. Sarkozy, he stressed, had made much progress in fostering dialogue with and among the rather fractious Muslim organizations in France. That said, Martinon noted that French principles of secular government limited how large a role the GOF could comfortably and legally play. On imam training specifically, Martinon insisted any project would have to be executed through a "sub-contract," and, if it was to be effective, carried out on French soil. He was particularly receptive, however, to engaging with the U.S. on the best way to address imam training while expressing some skepticism about the applicability of the Turkish model of such training to France. Martinon also took the opportunity to emphasize to Bryza that Sarkozy's position against EU membership for Turkey "would not change in the coming months. END SUMMARY

¶2. (S) Visiting EUR DAS Matt Bryza met October 24 with Minister of Interior Nicolas Sarkozy's Diplomatic Advisor, David Martinon, to discuss Muslim integration in France (and Europe) and ideas for improving the training of imams. Bryza explained that the U.S. was examining its efforts to engage with Muslim leaders with a focus not on engaging only for the sake of engagement, but to support Muslims embracing their own traditions of tolerant faith and scientific learning as they struggle against narrow and extreme proponents of Islam. The U.S. and European allies all had a strong interest in the long-run outcome of the ongoing battle for hearts and minds within Islam. The key was to empower Muslims who, (though perhaps not pro-American), seek to counter extremism and who enjoy authority and credibility among fellow Muslims. A crucial task was to help Europe's Muslim communities acquaint themselves with their own tolerant traditions, so they could resist extremist recruiters. Bryza and Martinon agreed that second- and third-generation Muslims in Europe were often unfamiliar with their families, own traditions, since the first generation often focused on blending into their adopted societies and making ends meet. This left second- and third-generation European Muslims with a vague sense that they were Muslim, but without an understanding of what this meant in practice. This "spiritual vacuum," coupled with a sense of secular alienation (as evidenced in the October 2005 riots among non-Muslim and Muslim immigrants in France) provided prime targets for extremist recruiters. Governments could counter extremist recruiters by helping second- and third-generation Muslims in Europe reacquaint

themselves with their own traditions. Governments could also encourage integration of Muslim communities into mainstream European society in a way that allowed them to be proud of both their French citizenship and their Algerian/Moroccan/Turkish Muslim traditions as well.

13. (S) Martinon highlighted the various initiatives taken by Interior Minister Sarkozy to work more closely with the Muslim communities in France. "Sarkozy has done for the Muslims what Napoleon did for the Jews two centuries ago" he said. Sarkozy's most successful venture, Martinon noted, was the creation of "official Islam," in the form of the French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM), whose director is appointed by the MOI and is currently Dalil Boubakeur, a religious leader of Algerian origin with ties to the Algerian government. He stressed, however, that there were at least seven divergent schools of Islamic thought in France and that this was the first time the government had succeeded in bringing many of them to the table, including the Union of Islamic Organizations in France (UOIF), often considered as one of the more extreme Muslim groups in the country and associated with the Muslim Brotherhood "movement."

14. (S) Sarkozy, Martinon explained, believed that while it was difficult to talk to some extremist elements, and while it was important for moderate forces to prevail, it was vital to bring even those Muslims with extreme views into the dialogue: "An identity that is marginalized is radicalized," he said. Martinon stressed the importance of "an Islam of France," and not "an Islam in France." Political Islam, he said, had to be engaged in some way in order to avoid further radicalization. While he excluded the Salafists as political partners, he said that political Islam could no longer be ignored. "Every year we dismantle between two and four major terrorist operations, both home grown and from outside,

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mostly due to our excellent cooperation with North African security services," he said. He added that the GOF carefully watched mosques, as a security imperative, but that clearly this was not sufficient. A great deal of discussion was taking place in French circles, Martinon said, and while the French were on the verge of a policy shift, they "had not yet found their voice."

15. (S) Martinon noted the French Government's goal of training a cadre of imams in France who could preach "French Islam." Imam training by the government, Martinon lamented, was not possible given the 1905 law that prohibits the state from financing any religion. That said, the CFCM and GOF officials had begun to discuss the issue, so far with no concrete results. Martinon dismissed the idea of training imams outside France, and said that any training would have to be done in France with the aim of avoiding outside influence. It was worrisome enough, he added, that many mosques were financed from abroad. Bryza noted the problem of identifying "reliable" imams-- e.g., those who were not masking extremist sentiment by using liberal-sounding rhetoric in conversations with government officials. Bryza described an emerging and quiet effort he was working on in conjunction with Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) to identify promising imams from the countries from which Europe's Muslims emigrate, who could begin the process of training "home-grown" imams in Europe. Bryza said the effort aimed to draw on the Diyanet's decades of experience in training imams for service in Europe administering to Turkish emigrant communities. To succeed, such an effort would need to mitigate the Diyanet's negative tendency to exert political control from Ankara over Turkish emigrants in Europe, thereby hampering their integration into European mainstream societies. This nascent effort was beginning to take shape in the Netherlands, where progressive imams visit from Turkey to familiarize themselves with Dutch-Moroccan Muslim communities and with Dutch community leaders/police. The Turkish imams then travel to Morocco to explore how to prepare the first generation of imams who might travel to the

Netherlands to begin training of "home grown" imams in Europe. Martinon shared Bryza,s criticism of the Turkish model for creating Turkish communities abroad that failed to integrate. He expressed enthusiasm, however, for working with the U.S. and others on coming up with ideas for imam training and encouraged Bryza and other U.S. officials to engage with Muslim religious leaders in France. He pointed Bryza towards the director of the CFCM and Paris Grand Mosque, but cautioned him that this should only be a first contact, as the director was "not representative of French Muslims," and perhaps "not even a real Muslim." He added that the subject was extremely sensitive and that negotiations over the establishment of the CFCM with the Algerian and Moroccan governments had been painstakingly difficult.

¶6. (S) Martinon took the opportunity to restate Sarkozy,s opposition to EU membership for Turkey and emphasized that there would be no change in this position for at least the next several months, through the end of the Chirac presidency. He said there was some confusion among some GOF officials about the American position on Turkey,s EU membership. On the one hand, he said, the United States exerted a great deal of pressure on the EU to accept Turkey and an additional 70 million Muslims, while on the other hand expressing concern over the integration of Muslims in Europe.

Bryza responded that the U.S. objective was not so much whether Turkey eventually joined the EU, since such a decision was a matter for EU members states. The U.S. objective was for the prospect of EU membership to remain alive in Turkey to provide an incentive for Turkish political leaders and society to take tough reform decisions that would strengthen Turkey,s secular democracy and prosperity with its Muslim majority population. Martinon agreed on the importance of Turkey continuing this modernization process, but reiterated that for Sarkozy, the membership of 70 million relatively poor Turks into the EU was still a bridge too far.

¶7. (U) DAS Bryza has cleared this message.

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